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PREACHED AT THE

PARISH CHURCH OF BARKING,

IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX,

On SUNDAY, MAY the 25th, 1800:

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S E R M O N.

ACTS XX. V. 32.

AND NOW BRETHREN, I COMMEND YOU TO GOD, AND TO THE
WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, AND
TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THEM WHICH
ARE SANCTIFIED.

THESE words are part of the last address of that holy and indefatigable Apostle St. Paul, to the elders and disciples of the Ephesian church. By an immediate revelation made to him by the Holy Spirit, he was commanded to go unto Jerusalem, and preach the gospel in that city. That he might not be drawn from his purpose, or detained by the tender importunities of the Christian brethren at Ephesus, he passed by that place, and came to Miletus. He sent, however, for the elders of their church, and as many as through him were brought to a knowledge and love of the truth, and addressed himself to them in a solemn and pathetic manner, suggesting suitable instructions for their growth in grace.

He appealed to their knowledge and observation of his conduct, for a proof of his integrity, diligence, and zeal, in the exercise of
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his ministry amongst them; and he particularly reminded them of the fidelity and earnestness with which he had preached, and of the grand subjects on which he had insisted, namely, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." He informed them that he was going under a strong impulse of the Spirit to Jerusalem, and though ignorant of the final event, he had received positive and repeated assurances, that bonds and afflictions awaited him there. Yet he declared, that far from being staggered by the prospect, he valued not life itself, provided he could finish his course with joy, and fulfil his ministry by an extensive propagation of the Gospel.

The Apostle next told them, that they were then looking upon him *for the last time*. This consideration made him more earnest in his address and instructions, and no doubt excited greater attention in his hearers. He therefore exhorted them to consider, that as he had delivered to them the "whole counsel of God" without reserve, he should stand acquitted at the day of judgment, whatever might become of the people for whom he laboured, and that they must answer for their own souls. He likewise charged the Elders to maintain a constant care over themselves, and every part of the flock of Christ, remembering how dear to God was that Church, "which he had purchased with his own blood." And he warned them to beware of false and destructive teachers, who, after his departure, would endeavour to draw off the people from their faithful pastors, attaching many to themselves as their disciples, and thus causing heresies and divisions in the church.

Having pointed out these things to their notice, and laid down several rules for their future conduct, the Apostle solemnly "commended them to God, and to the word of his grace," which, he assured them, if their own prayers and sincere endeavours were
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not wanting, would not fail to keep them stedfast in the faith and in obedience, and finally bring them to the eternal reward prepared for all true believers. This important and affectionate address was concluded with humble and fervent prayer: and the whole company were greatly affected with the mingled passions of love and sorrow, on being informed that they were no more to behold the face of so faithful and kind a friend. " And they all wept sore, and " fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for " the words which he spake, that they should see his face no " more!"

In this devout and instructive manner did the Apostle take leave of those who had been convinced and converted to a belief of the Gospel by his preaching and ministry, and his words could not fail to make a deep and durable impression on their minds.

May all the ambassadors of Christ feel the same generous concern for the souls of the people committed to their charge! May Jesus, their exalted Lord, endue them with all necessary wisdom, strength, and zeal, and prosper their exertions for his own glory, and his people's good! May he teach and enable them to " take heed unto " themselves, and to all the flock!" So will they not shun to " declare unto them the whole counsel of God," but will " hold " forth the form of sound doctrine" by their lives, as well as by their discourses. And when they are separated from those among whom they have laboured, it will inspire them with gratitude, resignation, and joy, to be assured that they are " pure from the blood " of all men:" and though they have many mournful seasons and painful separations, yet if they have not laboured in vain, their " sorrow will be turned into joy," by the delightful expectation of meeting their beloved friends again in a better and more lasting state.

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In treating further on this subject, I shall endeavour to shew, in the first place, how necessary it is to commend ourselves and all our concerns to the protection and the grace of God.—And, secondly, I shall make some observations for our mutual edification and comfort.

First, I am to shew how necessary it is to commend ourselves and all our concerns to the protection and grace of God.

Prayer for the blessing of God is so necessary a duty, and so essential to our spiritual and temporal welfare, that St. Paul has urged it strongly, both by precept and example. It is that which alone gives efficacy to all our endeavours, and insures their ultimate success. The pious Christian has recourse to it on all occasions, from a deep conviction of God's sufficiency, and his own inability to do any thing as of himself. He continually looks up to Heaven, and with fervency of soul commends himself and all his undertakings to the God of all grace and strength. He intreats the Father of Spirits so to work with his spirit, as to enlighten and strengthen his understanding, to guide and direct him in his course, and render all his spiritual endeavours effectual; so that however it may be with him as to the outward man, his better part may, amidst all changes, still prosper and be in health, that he may be rich towards God, whatever he may be in other respects. And in all his prayers he maintains a truly catholic spirit, and commends others as well as himself to the gracious favour of the Lord; praying, that "his ways may be known" wherever there is a human creature to hear the blessed tidings of his grace; and that all who believe the word may be "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto eternal salvation."

But it is doubtless the more particular duty of those who are Ministers and "Stewards of the manifold grace of God," to commend themselves and the people committed to their charge to the blessing of heaven. The means best calculated to do good, however maturely considered, and sedulously employed will fail if we rely upon our own exertions alone. We may "be instant in season and out of season," may study and preach from morning till night, and year after year, and yet not have our labours rendered effectual to any saving purpose, if we neglect to pray for the divine blessing on them; for "neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." We must therefore pray that "none of our words fall to the ground, and return unto us void:" and that the Holy Spirit would cause them to sink deep into the hearts of those who hear us, that they may produce abundant fruit in their lives and conversations.

Under the old dispensation, Samuel the prophet and judge of Israel, did not think it sufficient to teach the people "the good and the right way," but deemed himself bound in duty to pray for their welfare. "Moreover," says he, "as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

And in the New Testament Epaphras, that faithful minister and servant of Christ, is represented as not resting satisfied with teaching the people of Colosse, with bringing them to a knowledge of the truth, and confirming them in the faith; but above all things, he "laboured fervently for them in his prayers before God, that they might be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, and stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Nor did his absence from them at all diminish his concern for their welfare, or cause his prayers to cease for their continuance
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and growth in grace. Nay it rather increased his desires for their sanctification and the salvation of their souls, as he was no longer able to serve them by his personal ministry. This was the most unequivocal testimony of his affection and regard that he could possibly give them: and perhaps in no other way, did he more advance their spiritual and eternal interests; for "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," will avail much at the throne of grace.

St. Paul also especially commended in his prayers to God, the souls of those who were converted to the faith. Though he neglected no other means, declined no fatigue, shrunk from no danger, "became all things to all men," that he might turn *some* "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" yet he did not think it sufficient to labour, to set an example of love, meekness, integrity and zeal, and to give directions, and rules of faith and practice to those among whom he exercised his ministry and apostle-ship; but it was also his constant and "earnest *prayer* to "God, that Israel might be saved." And that the Almighty would prosper his endeavours for the conversion of sinners.—Thus he begins and ends almost every Epistle with fervent supplications and prayers, commending those to whom he wrote, and among whom he laboured to the direction and blessing of God.

When he was compelled to leave his faithful brethren at Antioch, in consequence of the persecution which immediately threatened him and his fellow-labourer Barnabas, he would not depart, without first praying with them, and commending their souls to the gracious "keeping of the Lord on whom they believed."

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In like manner he commended the Ephesian elders and converts, at Miletus, to God's protection and blessing, at the same time committing them "to the word of his grace," as the only and sufficient rule of their conduct,—as the ground of their hope,—and the source of their consolation.

The Apostle derived no small satisfaction from the consideration that he did not leave them in doubtful suspense, in what manner they were to walk before God, so as to obtain his grace and guidance during their pilgrimage on earth, and thereby secure an eternal blessedness in heaven. He had not declined either from fear, or desire of their applause, or friendship to declare unto them the "whole counsel of God" respecting the way of salvation by Christ for all true believers, and the eternal destruction of those who "adjudge themselves unworthy of everlasting life," by neglecting the offers of grace and mercy held out to them, in and through the sufferings and merits of their Lord and Saviour. Nor was he conscious that he had withheld from them any instructions, warnings or encouragements, which could in any degree conduce to their spiritual advantage. He had given them a bright pattern for their imitation, directing them to regulate their lives and conversations according to it, and to "walk so as they had him for an example." And if they "continued in the things they had learned," taking the Gospel as "a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their paths," it would point out to them that safe and happy road which leads to heaven.

Above all, he felt a strong persuasion, that although he was about to depart from them, and they would no longer enjoy the benefit of his personal ministry, yet God was able to "build them up in their most holy faith, and to give them an everlasting inheritance with the Saints in light." Although he by whose care and labours the

Ephesian converts had been edified and confirmed in the true faith, was soon to be removed from them, yet the Apostle knew that "Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for them," and according to his gracious promise would be ever with his faithful people, "even unto the end of the world."

The Apostle also commended them to the "word of God's grace," which he had spoken to them, as the ground of their hope.

The hope which is founded upon the word of God, anticipates the enjoyment of heavenly things; it fills the soul of the believer with transport and delight; and in the hours of serious contemplation, it gives him a foretaste of those joys which are reserved for the people of God.

If this grace reigned in the hearts of the Ephesian converts, it would enable them to sit loose to this world, and the enjoyments of it, and to delight themselves principally in God and in heavenly things. It would carry them on with ardour in their Christian course, and make them perform all their duties with cheerfulness, not by constraint, but willingly. And "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those that are before, they would continually be pressing forward towards the prize of their high calling."

The "word of God's grace," if received into their hearts by a true and living faith, would likewise prove to them a never-failing source of consolation in every season of sorrow and affliction.

It would not only be their directory and guide, during the time of their sojourning on earth, but also their companion in solitude, their solace in distress, and their support in death. It would furnish their minds with such principles, as would enable them to act under the ills and distresses of life, with Christian composure and resignation.

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In those scenes and circumstances, which are so terrifying and awful to the greater part of mankind, *they* would find the Gospel to be an anchor to their souls, which would preserve them sure and stedfast, and though all outward things appeared to be against them, they would be supported with the consideration that the "Lord" "would provide" and help them out of all, or else give them strength in proportion to the necessities of their case. Thus it would keep them from fainting under the trials they would necessarily meet with in their Christian course, and even make their burthens a blessing. And in proportion as their knowledge and faith in the "word of "God's grace" should increase, so would their fear of death proportionably decrease; that when it pleased the great Father of Spirits to call them out of this world, they would not quit this mortal scene with a heavy heart, and dreadful fears; but would depart in peace, and commend their souls with humility and joy into the hands of him who gave them.

This the Apostle knew from his experience of its power and efficacy on his own heart; as it enabled him not only to be patient under trials and afflictions, but even to "rejoice and glory in tribulations," and to delight himself in the expectation and approach of death.— This last enemy, so dreadful to many, appeared to him a friendly messenger to call his soul into the habitations of the blessed. He was persuaded that there was "laid up a crown of righteousness, which" "the Lord, the righteous Judge would give not to himself only, but" "unto all them also that love his appearing." Under the comfortable and animating influence of these considerations, the Apostle took leave of his brethren at Miletus with less concern and reluctance; earnestly commending them to him, who, in answer to their prayers, was both able and willing to confirm them in the faith, to "keep" "them from falling, and at length present them faultless before" "the presence of God with exceeding joy."

I shall now proceed to the second head of my discourse, and apply what has been said to the particular occasion on which I now address you, for our mutual edification and comfort.

It may be expected that before I quit this place, where I have exercised my ministry nearly the space of five years, I should address you in a farewell discourse. For my part I know not that it is necessary; as I trust I need not assure you of my sincere regard for your welfare, and that it is with real sorrow and reluctance I am about to leave you. But as something seems to be expected from me, and as it might be unbecoming in me to leave you in an abrupt manner; I shall, in humble imitation of the Apostle, briefly recapitulate some of the leading doctrines of my discourses, and lay down some rules for the direction of your future conduct.

I can truly say, that it has been my pleasure as well as duty, to serve you in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: and the kind acceptance and due improvement, which several among you have made of my honest and well-intended labours, has given me no small encouragement. Indeed, I gladly embrace this opportunity to acknowledge publicly, that the obliging attention and friendly regards which many of you have manifested towards me, have been highly grateful to my feelings: and it has been my wish and endeavour to obtain your esteem only by such a conscientious discharge of my duty, as might deserve it.

Too many, I had reason to believe, had but imperfect notions of Christianity when I first came among you. It has therefore been my principal object in all my discourses, to give you such a clear view of the Gospel scheme of salvation, as might establish you in the knowledge and belief of Jesus Christ, upon the most just and solid grounds: and such a deep sense of the love of God in the wonderful
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work of our Redemption, as might form and fix every good principle in your minds productive of all righteousness in the life and behaviour. To this end, I have declared unto you "the whole counsel of God" respecting the way of salvation, according to the measure of knowledge and grace which He has given me: and I have particularly insisted upon those fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." It has been my principal design to convince you of the necessity of making the mercy of God your only dependence. And I have taught you to look for salvation in the atonement and merits of that appointed Mediator, to whom the Holy Scriptures direct the eyes of sinful men, as their Redeemer and Advocate with God.

It has also been my constant study to waive the laboured ornaments of language, and to make every doctrine and sentiment I have advanced, clear and intelligible to the meanest capacity, with a view to instruct and reform the most unlearned, and to bring that class of people to a saving knowledge of the Gospel, who stand most in need of information and guidance. At the same time, I have striven to avoid that fond familiarity of expression, and degrading meanness of phrase, with which some (who nevertheless I believe mean well) declare their experience and love towards God and heavenly things. The sacred writers ever speak with profound awe and reverence of their Almighty Father and Saviour, yet with the utmost plainness and simplicity. This united perspicuity and dignity of expression, should be observed by us, as peculiarly suitable to the grand subjects on which we treat.

I have frequently exhorted you to keep in mind, that you are called out of darkness, misery, and error, and brought to enjoy the pure and marvellous light of the gospel. You have ministers to advise and instruct you; and you have "the word of God's grace in
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" your hands," by which you may try the truth of the doctrines that we preach.

It is also your privilege and happiness to live in an age and country in which every one may worship God according to the dictates of his religion and conscience. How often has it been the lot of Christians to prosecute their everlasting concerns under the frowns of the world, and at the very hazard of their lives? But we " sit under our own vine and fig-tree," in the undisturbed enjoyment of our religious and social duties, " none making us afraid."—These are glorious and invaluable privileges. I pray God we may duly improve them to our present comfort and future benefit; and that they may be continued to us and our posterity!

Add to this, you have the purest form of the religion of Jesus *established* in the land. The liturgy of our Church is truly scriptural and devout. Her articles and homilies are a barrier against the intrusion of error. And if you earnestly endeavour, with the assistance of Divine grace, to regulate your lives and conversations according to their holy injunctions, you may rest satisfied that you are members of a true Church, " built upon the Apostles and Prophets, " whereof Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone."

There is more of sin than some among you seem to be aware, in inconsiderately separating yourselves, and in seducing others from the established worship, and hereby creating heresies and divisions in a Church, where the ordinances of religion are regularly administered. Principles of insubordination and self-will can never build us up in " unity of faith and spirit, and in the bond of peace."—With such dispositions how can we " all speak the same thing," and be perfectly " joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment," to which the Apostle so passionately exhorts us in the
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name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Neither enlist yourselves, nor be pressed into the service of any sect or party whatsoever. Be not either "of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas." Be only Christians; and by regular and quiet adherence to the established Church, "follow the things which make for peace."

Endeavour to love, serve, and worship God, according to the Gospel of his blessed Son; "in sincerity and truth." And with simplicity and diligence "search the scriptures, for in them only "are the words of eternal life; and they are able to make you "wise unto salvation."

Above all, you should remember, that with a vain, wordly, sensual frame of mind, it is impossible to see and relish the truth as it is in Jesus. Nor can any pains and explications compel such men to believe, or force knowledge upon them, if they are unwilling to understand. But if they are heartily disposed to obey the Divine will, and "come to the light," with an earnest desire to be instructed and taught, they "shall know of the doctrine whether it be of "God." The love of truth, purity of mind, and patient application, are necessary on your part; and I am persuaded that these dispositions alone will render the principal doctrines of Scripture plain and intelligible to the meanest capacity.

You should never forget, that to spend weeks, and months, and even years, in speculating upon the Sacred Writings, if you do not imbibe the principles they teach, lay them to heart, and reduce them to practice, amounts to no more than a mere amusement.— "Though you understand all knowledge and all mysteries," so as to be able to talk and argue well, yet if you are destitute of that faith which worketh by love to God and man, "these gifts," specious and desirable as they may appear, "will profit you nothing."

St. Paul was ravished with the charms of the Gospel; he could never mention it but in terms of the highest admiration, gratitude, and love. He felt its power and efficacy upon his own heart; it raised in him the brightest views of honour, glory, and immortality, far above all earthly things. And we in like manner understand the Gospel to the saving of our souls, when it works upon every spring of action within us, regulating our wills, our hearts, and our affections, and producing abundant fruit in the life.

Another most important duty, which I have frequently insisted upon in my discourses, and of which we have a striking example in the text, is Prayer. Prayer to God, the Father of lights, the Fountain of all illumination, is necessary to the successful reading and hearing the "word of God's grace." Human application, without the divine blessing, will be vain and ineffectual to any saving purpose. It is God's work to "open both the understanding and the heart," that you may digest what you read, and be devoutly impressed by what you hear. "The Lord alone giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding:" even "the preparation of the heart is from the Lord." All your well-springs are in him, your supplies of grace and guidance must be drawn from him, and his gracious influence must render your endeavours of any kind successful. Not that the Almighty has *so* promised blessings, as to set aside the use of proper means to obtain them. He requires us to use means that we may obtain the ends which they are designed to produce; and he worketh *with* us, and *by* us, as well as *in* us. Nor has he appointed any means, how excellent soever in themselves, which exempt us from a dependance upon his assistance and blessing. On the contrary, we are exhorted in all that we do, to seek from the Lord daily supplies of grace, under a sense of our own insufficiency.

When therefore you apply yourselves to the study of the Holy Scriptures, you should not fail to make your earnest supplication to the fountain
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of all wisdom, and the God of all grace, that he would "open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous things of his law." Or, in the Apostle's words, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of your understandings being enlightened," you may have just views and apprehensions of the riches of his wisdom and grace, and that your hearts may be devoutly impressed with a deep and lasting sense of them.

I have likewise endeavoured to convince you, both from Scripture and the testimony of your own hearts and consciences, that in yourselves you are weak, frail creatures, continually liable to be led away from your duty: that though heavenly things are set before you, your souls naturally "cleave to the dust:" that the knowledge of religion will not necessarily insure the practice of it: and that you cannot properly discharge any religious or moral duty whatever, without the aid and strength of the Holy Spirit.

You dwell in a world full of snares and temptations; you "carry about you a body of sin and death;" and you have too much of a corrupt heart remaining within you, which renders you in constant danger of falling. You are weak; the enemies of your souls are many and strong, and continually present with you. I have therefore directed you to "commend yourselves to God, and to the word of his grace," that you may be more under the influence of his Almighty aid and defence. And I have endeavoured to impress deeply upon your minds, that when once the means of religion are discarded, the principles of it will be of no long continuance. When once you live in the avowed or habitual neglect, or in the careless performance of secret prayer and public worship, and

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cease to commend yourselves and all your concerns to the grace and protection of God, you will soon also cease to fear and obey him.

Hence I have pointed out to you the true cause of your backslidings, and of your insensibility and indifference concerning God and heavenly things; namely, your own backwardness to cultivate prayer, and to commend yourselves to his grace. It is not any unwillingness in him to "build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," but the cause is in yourselves; you neglect prayer, or at best perform it with inattention or indifference; you avoid self-examination; you forget or wholly overlook the Lord who redeemed you; you frequently or altogether absent yourselves from Church, or from the Sacrament; you plunge into the world, and give up yourselves too much to the things of time and sense, forgetful of eternity.—What wonder then if your faith fail; if your love to God declines; if your spiritual strength is weakened; and your spiritual enemies get an advantage over you; and that all your expectations of growing in grace and increasing in holiness are vain and ineffectual!

"God will be with you, while you are with him." He will "build you up in your most holy faith," and give you a blessed and eternal inheritance, if you habitually and devoutly wait upon him according to his appointment; but if you forget and despise him, and draw aside from him to trifles and silly vanities, whom have you to blame and condemn but yourselves?

Were all those who "fall away from their former steadfastness," or who continue hardened and impenitent, to ask themselves, why their grace languishes, their spiritual strength declines, and they are wholly
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dead to things of a divine nature, they might in general give the reason implied in my text ; namely, because they have neglected to “ commend themselves to God, and to the word of his grace.”

From these considerations I have often, and earnestly endeavoured to persuade you to pray constantly and fervently for the quickening influences of God's Holy Spirit, to lead you into a further acquaintance with Christ; to sanctify your hearts; to strengthen that which is weak; to support you in the discharge of every duty; to give success to all your endeavours; to make you know how truly the ways of religion, are “ ways of pleasantness, and that all her “ paths are peace; and to shew you the path of life,” and give you a foretaste of those pleasures “ which are at God's right hand for “ evermore.” It was in the use of these proper and suitable means, that the Lord prepared the hearts of Cornelius, Lydia, and other excellent persons mentioned in scripture, who were brought to a knowledge and love of the “ truth as it is in Jesus.” The arm of “ the Lord is not shortened,” nor do any of us stand in less need of his grace, than his people of old time. That word which pricked “ the hearts,” of his first disciples, is still “ quick and powerful,” and can both humble and rejoice the hearts of those who diligently and devoutly study it. In the strong language of the Apostle “ the “ word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even “ to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and “ marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the “ heart.”

I beseech you therefore, as you regard the salvation of your immortal souls, to value the “ word of God's grace” as your richest treasure, and the only fund of true and perfect religious knowledge, comfort and joy, that your hearts may be deeply impressed with the wonders of divine love. Read it over diligently, and treasure it up

in your minds as a rule of life, and you will not fail to experience its power and efficacy. You will find it "mighty to the pulling down every strong-hold of sin and error," and to the setting up that kingdom in your hearts, which is love, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.

Forfake not the assembling of yourselves together in the public worship of the Church; with "readiness of mind" embrace every opportunity of obtaining religious instruction, and of attending those ordinances which God in mercy to our souls, has appointed and continued to us. Never suffer a light or trifling excuse to keep you from this holy place, and above all, take heed that you do not dedicate this day, which God from the beginning blessed and made holy, to idleness or dissipation. Live in love and charity towards all men, and "especially towards them who are of the household of faith." Let your hearts and views be raised above this world; be daily looking and preparing for the coming of the Lord. And above all things, be instant and fervent in prayer; make a conscience of family and private devotion; and commend others as well as yourselves to the grace and protection of God. So will your "love" abound yet more and more in all knowledge and in all judgment; "ye will approve those things which are excellent; and ye will be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

And now, my beloved brethren, I most earnestly beseech you to call to remembrance all those dissuaves from impiety and sin, all those exhortations to holiness and virtue, which in the course of my ministry I have made to you, with much weakness and infirmity, but with an honest mind, and with a hearty concern for your spiritual and eternal welfare. I beg of you for my sake, for your own
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sakes, and above all, for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whose name, and by whose authority I have now, and heretofore addressed you; that you would attend to this, the last warning which I am 'to give you in the relation and character of your Minister.

If any among you have hitherto lived neglectful of your religious interests, and regardless of God and eternity, I most earnestly intreat you to consider your misery and your danger, now, while your day of salvation lasteth, and the hour of reformation is yet your own. If you continue careless and unconcerned about the welfare of your souls, I presume not to say how the Almighty will deal with you; whether he will immediately cut you off, or give you up to final hardness and impenitency of heart, or whether his grace may at length awaken you to a just sense of your awful condition. But this I will confidently say, that if you delay any longer, and should at last repent and turn to God, your delay will give you great anguish and bitterness of soul. You will either lament it before God in unutterable sorrow here, or you will curse your own folly and madness in that dreadful state, "where the worm" of a condemning conscience "dieth not, and the fire" of God's holy indignation "can-
"not be quenched." Should you continue and die in a sinful state, you will wish, that dreadful as hell is, you had rather fallen into it sooner, than have lived regardless of the warnings you had received, and in the midst of so many abused mercies, to render the degree of your punishment more insupportable, and your sense of it more exquisitely tormenting. I do therefore in the most solemn and affectionate manner exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the worth of your immortal souls, that you put not off the concerns of eternity to an uncertain hereafter.

If even *now* you return from your sins, and strive and pray for grace to "do that which is lawful and right, you shall surely live,
"you

"you shall not die." Let this plain, this repeated, this final declaration of one who sincerely loves and regards you, and who has had all the testimonies he could wish, many more than he could expect, of esteem and affection from you, sink deep into your hearts, and have the desired influence upon your lives. To the many and signal proofs you have shewn of your good-will towards me, add, I beseech you, the most valuable, the most acceptable, the most proper pledge of your love to me,—that of permitting me to be an instrument (under God) of your everlasting salvation. And if, in the course of my ministry, I have been in any way the means of doing you good, by awakening your minds to serious study, and pious reflections, I intreat you to give the whole glory to God, who has proved to you that the power is entirely of himself, since he has been pleased to make use of so very weak an instrument.

How happy would it be, both for your souls, and for mine, if when I come to render an account of my ministry in this place to Christ, my Lord and Master, I could do it in the same words in which he gave to his Father an account of the discharge of his personal ministry:—"I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them. All mine are thine; those that thou gavest me, have I kept, and none of them are lost."—May God in his infinite mercy pardon my defects in preaching his word, and yours in hearing it! May the good seed, which I trust *has* been sown among you, and that which *shall* be sown, take deep root downwards, and bear abundant fruit upwards! May those who shall follow me, be more able stewards of the mysteries of God, than I have been! May the same kind reception and encouragement which my ministry has found among you, be transferred to him who shall succeed me!

May

May he be successful in endeavouring to gather and edify that flock, which the Chief Shepherd "purchased with his own blood!" May the same unanimity among yourselves, and the same love one of another, be still preserved, be still conspicuous among you!

And now, brethren, with most earnest desires for your welfare, not in this world only, but in that which shall have no end, I "commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is "able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all "them which are sanctified." And I beseech you in return to remember me in your prayers to God, and to intreat his blessing on my endeavours for the salvation of those now committed to my charge. And I pray God that we may meet again in that lasting and more blessed state, where there will be no painful separations; but where we may hope to dwell together in the presence of God, in holiness and happiness for ever, for the sake and through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.

Crowther
Mr.
M. H. H. leave



